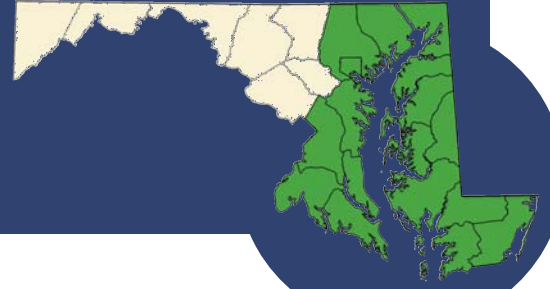


Partnerships with Local Government

Maryland Coastal Program



The Issue...

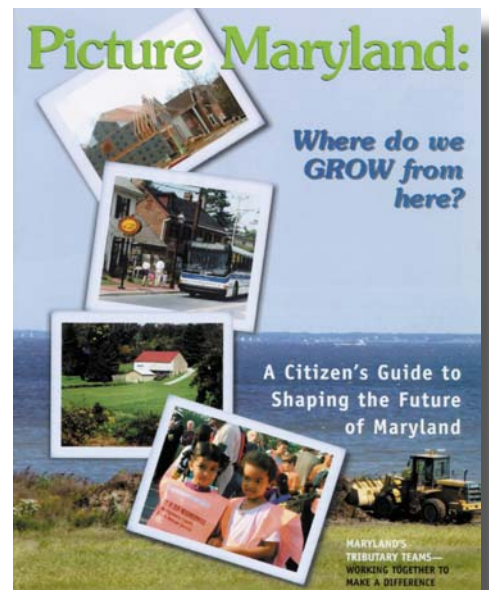
The primary responsibility for land use decisions in Maryland lies with local governments. Given the extreme differences in population, growth and incomes among coastal counties in Maryland, there are significant differences in local management capacities. Even those local governments which have established strong land use programs are having difficulty keeping up with the pace of population growth and the demands that it places on infrastructure needs and natural resources.

The State's Role...

In Maryland, statewide land use policies set the framework for the management of activities affecting coastal resources. These include the precedent setting Critical Area Act, Forest Conservation Act, 1992 Planning Act, and the 1997 Priority Funding Areas Act. Together, these policies work to incorporate natural resource planning into development decisions and direct growth toward areas with existing development where it can be most efficiently served by existing infrastructure. While the State sets the overall policies and processes for land use decision-making, and has the ultimate authority over land use decisions through its intervention authority, implementation of land use policies is through local governments. State technical and financial support is essential for effective local implementation.

Maryland works closely with local governments to:

- **Provide technical assistance on resource protection, restoration, and development** including local planning assistance from the Department of Planning, local soil conservation districts associated with the Department of Agriculture, and forestry, stream monitoring and land preservation activities with the Department of Natural Resources
- **Fund and support planning and implementation efforts** including direct funding to preserve land through the Rural Legacy Program, hire environmental planners to carry out the Critical Areas Program, and develop local plans for sensitive areas, hazards mitigation, and watershed management.
- **Provide forums for local governments** on regional issues through the Chesapeake Bay Program Local Government Advisory Committee, the Coastal Bays Program Implementation Committee and the Tributary Teams which are developing nutrient reduction strategies for the ten major watersheds in the State.



As a public outreach tool, the Coastal Program co-sponsored a citizens guide on growth management for distribution in the *Baltimore Sun*.

The Coastal Programs Role...

Maryland's coastal zone is comprised of the sixteen counties which border the Chesapeake Bay, its tidal tributaries and the Atlantic ocean. Building partnerships with these counties to better focus state resources on coastal management challenges at the local scale is one of the primary functions of the Coastal Program.

Technical Assistance...

Through the Maryland Coastal Program, technical assistance has been provided to help local governments make their planning activities and development regulations consistent with and complimentary to State laws. Specifically, assistance has been provided to develop and implement sensitive areas elements of local comprehensive plans; identify and implement appropriate practices for better land use management; update local comprehensive plans, sensitive areas elements, and local code and ordinances; watershed planning; green building design; low impact development; and coastal hazard planning and mitigation.

Direct Financial Support...

Under the Critical Area Act, local governments are responsible for developing and implementing individual Critical Area Programs through amendments to local comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, and subdivision regulations. The programs that have subsequently been adopted by local governments are specific and comprehensive. Since 1997, over \$2.6 million of federal Coastal Program funds have been used to implement and enforce local Critical Area Programs. Funding has been used for:

- Comprehensive review and updating of local programs;
- Review of proposed projects to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations;
- Administrative and legal support to carry out implementation and program enforcement; and
- Education to help foster a more sensitive approach regarding the impact of land use on the bays and their tributaries.

The Coastal Program has also provided funding to local governments to update their sensitive areas plans to meet requirements of new state legislation. Examples of projects include:

- A multi-year project to : (1) characterize the conditions of Baltimore's stream buffers in order to determine the feasibility of developing additional protection measures, and (2) develop a multi-objective, dynamic floodplain management plan for Baltimore City.
- Creation of an Urban Growth Boundary Plan in Cecil County to influence the location and pace of future growth. As a result of this project, changes were made to improve implementation of the Comprehensive Plan by permitting higher density development in the designated growth area.



Stream corridor buffer required under the Critical Area Act.

In addition to these funding examples, funding has been made available to local governments to work on issues including hazard mitigation planning, on-site sewage disposal systems, and watershed planning.



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